

to utilizing their positions as champs to make somebody else's life better. Gregg Popovich won a Point of Light for his drug—anti-drug programs in the early nineties. What a class act that must be for players to work for a coach who then takes time out of his private life to set a good example for the children of the community in which he lives and to work to rally the armies of compassion to make somebody else's life better, in this case to help a community fight off the scourge of drugs.

Or David Robinson, who is now heavily involved in education in the San Antonio community. He's not only a great husband but a great role model for others to see. I know many of you all do the same thing in your communities, that you care deeply about the lives of your fellow citizens, and I want to congratulate you. I think you're champs because you understand that serving something greater than yourself is the

road to championships. And that's what you're here to do, is to receive the accolades from our country for serving as not only great athletes but as great role models for children who look up to you.

So welcome to the Rose Garden. Congratulations on such a great, successful season. And may God continue to bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:56 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Peter Holt, chairman and chief executive officer, R.C. Buford, general manager, Gregg Popovich, head coach, Danny Ferry, director of basketball operations, Tim Duncan, center, and David Robinson, retired center, San Antonio Spurs; and Representatives Lamar Smith and Henry Bonilla of Texas.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Iraq October 14, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107–243), the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102–1), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to post-liberation Iraq

under section 7 of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–338).

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 15.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion in Dinuba, California October 15, 2003

Como esta? [Applause] Me, too. [Laughter] Thanks for coming. It's an honor to

be here. Fred, thank you very much for your hospitality on this beautiful day. It's

been my honor to come to a place that's the embodiment of the American Dream. See, what we believe is, we believe people in this country ought to be able to work hard and dream big and realize their dreams. And the Ruiz family has done that.

It started with Grandma Rosie's pots and pans and the first batch of enchiladas. Fred was just telling me they produce 3 million burritos a day. For a man who likes burritos, I'm in heaven. [Laughter] I also like to thank the hospitality Louis Ruiz has shown me, the patriarch of this great family, the initial dreamer along with his son to build and create but, most importantly, to provide jobs for over 1,200 people—a chance for 1,200 people to realize their dreams. That's what America is all about. We're here to herald the greatness of America, the American spirit, the strength of our country.

I also had the honor of meeting Kim Ruiz Beck, who is the vice chairman of Ruiz Foods. I met the entire Ruiz family. They've got a big family. [Laughter] My only advice to the kids that were there was, "Listen to your mother. I'm listening to mine." And she's given me plenty of advice, I want you to know. [Laughter]

I appreciate the president of this company, John Signorino. I want to thank my friend Mel Martinez, who you've just met. Mel is the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. He's in my Cabinet. He's got a lot to do about the housing initiative I'm going to talk about in a minute.

Mel is a fellow who was raised in Cuba. His mother and dad didn't like the idea of their son being raised in a totalitarian state where there was no freedom, where there's still no freedom. So you know what they did? When he was 15 years old they put him on an airplane to America. They found a program where a loving family would be welcoming young Mel with open arms. He fled tyranny because his parents love freedom, and now he's in the Cabinet of the President of the United States. And I'm proud of my friend.

Congressman Devin Nunes is with us today. Congressman, thank you for coming. George Radanovich as well is a Member of the United States Congress. Thank you for coming, Jorge. *Bienvenidos*.

I had the honor of driving from the airport to this facility with the mayor of Fresno, Alan Autry. He's a good man. He cares deeply about the people of Fresno. He's doing a great job. I'm proud to call him friend. I want to thank Mike Smith, who is the mayor of Dinuba.

We just had what we call a roundtable discussion—it happened to be at a square table—[laughter]—about homeownership, the idea of people owning a home is part of the American Dream. Farid Assemi is a homebuilder here, was here, and Cara Pierce is the director of Housing and Consumer Credit, and the Azel family were all sharing with me their stories and what they're doing to help people own a home. I want to thank them for coming.

When I landed at your airport, I met a fellow named Denny Klaseus. Denny brought some of his family with him. [Laughter] You know, there's a lot—the reason I bring up Denny is there's a lot of talk about our country's military might, and we're strong, and I'm going to keep us strong. And there is talk about the economy and the wealth of the country, and we'll do everything we can to make sure the economy grows. But the true strength of the country is the heart and souls of our American citizens. That's our strength. It's the thing that makes this country incredibly strong. I bring up Denny because he is what we call a soldier in the army of compassion.

Out of the First Church of the Nazarene, he has become a volunteer, see. He has heard the call, the universal call of all religions to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. He helps each month to organize and pick up food donations. He knows when somebody is hungry and hurts, there needs to be love to help that person. Denny sets a great example.

The Ruiz Company sets a good example by encouraging people like Denny to volunteer. My call to our fellow Americans is, love a neighbor. When you find somebody who hurts, put your arm around them. Mentor a child. Go see shut-ins. Tell somebody you love them on a daily basis. America can and will change, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time, thanks to the soldiers in the armies of compassion. And Denny, thank you for being here.

Tomorrow I get to meet the Governor-elect. I'm looking forward to it. I'm going to share with him my optimism about the future of this country. I can't wait to talk to him about why I believe that America is on the right path, is on the path to making sure this Nation is secure and the world is more free and peaceful. We're on the right path to make sure our fellow citizens can find a job.

I'm optimistic, and I have reason to be optimistic. Our country has overcome a lot during the last couple of years. I want to remind you right quick what we have overcome, particularly as it relates to our economy.

First of all, the stock market started to decline in March of 2000. And then, just as we were going into office, the country went into a recession. That means there was negative growth. It means people were being laid off. Things weren't good in our economy. And then, just as things began to get better, the enemy hit us, on September the 11th, 2001, and that hurt us. It hurt the economy. It hurt the psyche of the American people. But we're a tough people. We're a determined people. And we began to get—it began to get right, and all of a sudden we found out that some of the leaders in corporate America forgot what it means to be a responsible citizen. They didn't tell the truth, and that hurt us. It shook the confidence. And then we had the march to war, both in Afghanistan and Iraq. All of these provided great challenges to our economy.

But we acted in Washington, DC. We passed tough laws—tough, new laws that says to the corporate criminal, “You'll be brought to justice for not telling the truth to your employee or your shareholders.”

We also passed taxes. See, I believe that if somebody has more money in their pocket, that person is going to demand an additional good or a service. And when that person demands a good or a service in our marketplace, somebody will produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces that good or a service, somebody is more likely to find work. The best way to get out of a recession and to encourage job creation is to let the people keep more of their own money. And that's what we did.

I took the message to the people, and the Congress heard the message, and we passed historic tax relief. We said, “Everybody who pays taxes ought to get tax relief. If you're going to have tax relief, let's just treat everybody the same. If you pay taxes, you get tax relief. We're not going to try to pick or choose winners.”

We said we want to encourage marriage in the Tax Code, not discourage marriage. So we've reduced the penalty on marriage. We understand how tough it is to raise a child in our society, and so we increased the child credit from \$600 a child to \$1,000 a child and put the check in the mail last summer.

We wanted to make sure that people had incentives to invest, so we reduced the tax on capital gains and dividends. And we want people, whether you're a farmer or a rancher or a small-business owner, to be able to pass your assets on from one generation to the next without the Government stepping in the way again. And so we got rid of the death tax.

But inherent in that tax—I want you all to understand that one of the things I kept in my mind the entire time that we were proposing this policy was the importance of the small-business owner in America. Most new jobs in America are created by

small businesses. Most small businesses pay taxes at the individual income tax rates. And so when you hear me talking about cutting individual taxes, I want you to remember that it benefits a lot of small-business owners. If you're interested in creating jobs, you want to provide incentives for expansion to those who create jobs. And that's the small-business owner right here in the United States of America.

We also raised the expensing allowed for small businesses on purchases from \$25,000 to \$100,000 to encourage people to be purchasing things in our society. And it's making a difference. These policies are making a difference.

We are overcoming the challenges we have faced. Our economy is growing. Last month, we had an increase in net new jobs. The after-tax incomes of people are going up. The productivity of the American worker is strong. We've got the best workers in the world. The entrepreneurial spirit is vibrant. And low interest rates have encouraged a housing boom here in America, and that's good—that's good.

Low interest rates mean that people, for example, have got the capacity to refinance their home. And probably some of you all have done that. That's helped our economy. The Azels, who I met with today, Kelly and Dan—by the way, he's got a scratch handicap. [*Laughter*]. I told him I needed a lesson or two. He said that they were able to take their first home—they're newly wed, and the first thing they do is they buy a home, thanks to low interest rates. It's a fantastic way to start off your marriage. They then were able to refinance, which meant they could do some remodeling on their home. They paid off the loan on their car.

Low interest rates has helped the American citizens. It's helped them buy a home. It's helped them refinance if they own a home. It's put more money in circulation, which is good for job creation. Low interest rates makes it easier to buy a home. And homeownership is at near-record highs, and

that's good because we need to be an ownership society in America. We want people owning their own home. If you own your own home, you have a vital stake in the future of this country.

And even though homeownership is at near-record highs, we've got too many of our fellow citizens who happen to be minorities who don't own a home. Seventy-five percent of the Anglos in America own a home. The minority homeownership in America is below 50 percent. And it seems like to me we've got to do something about it. If it's good for America that people own a home, we want people from all walks of life owning their own home.

And so I let out a goal. I said over the next decade, we want there to be 5.5 million new minority homeowners. That's why Mel is here. He helped set the goal. He is going to help implement the Federal policy I'm about to describe to you about how to meet that goal. Last year, we did a pretty good job. There's now 809,000 new minority homeowners in America. And that's positive for the country. It's good for the economy. It's also good for the spirit of our country that more people are owning a home.

But here are some of the things that we intend to do, and we discussed today earlier. Sometimes people have trouble finding the downpayment for a home. It makes them nervous when they hear the downpayment. We need to have a downpayment fund to help people with downpayments if they qualify. The Congress—the House passed my request for \$200 million a year. It's stuck in the Senate. The Senate needs to act. If they're interested in closing the minority homeowner-ship gap, they need to act on the downpayment fund.

A lot of times, there are people—think about buying a home, and they don't like the complexity. They don't understand what it means and how to buy a home. It's obviously a big deal when somebody purchases

a home, but it's confusing. People get nervous about it. And so we need more counseling and more education to make sure our fellow citizens know what it means to buy a home and can get comfortable with the idea of buying a home. And so we've doubled the amount of money available for community-based programs, faith-based programs to be able to brief their parishioners and/or their fellow citizens about the opportunities and the hope and what it takes to be able to purchase a home.

And finally, one other thing we're doing—amongst many, by the way—is simplifying the process to buy a home. A lot of people thinking about buying a home and all of a sudden they take a look at the fine print, and it kind of makes you nervous when you see a thick pile of paper with fine print. You're not exactly sure what you're buying into. So not only do we need to have counseling and education, but we've got to make sure the forms are more simple so that people know what they're doing. No, we're going to close this gap for the good of America.

I've also put out a six-point plan I want to share with you right quick that the Congress must pass in order to make sure the momentum of our economy continues. First and foremost, we've got to do a better job of controlling the high cost of health care. Small businesses need to be able to come together and form what's called associated health care plans to reduce the cost of health care. This country and this State must fight off the junk lawsuits that are making it awfully difficult for people to expand their businesses and hire people.

We need a national energy policy. If you're interested in growing the economy, people have got to make sure they've got a reliable source of energy. We need to encourage more conservation, more environmentally friendly ways of using the energy we have in hand. But one thing is for certain: For the sake of economic security and national security, we need to be less reliant on foreign sources of oil.

We need to cut out useless regulations and redtape that oftentimes come from Washington, and probably Sacramento, for that matter. We need to make sure that our trade policy, our trade policy opens up markets and creates a level playing field. I want to be selling U.S. farm products all over the world.

And finally, in order to make sure this economy continues to grow, there needs to be certainty in the Tax Code. All the tax relief I described to you goes away because of a quirk in the rules in the United States Senate. In other words, the Senate giveth on the one hand, and they taketh away with the other. In order to make sure our economy grows, all the tax relief I described needs to be made permanent by the United States Congress.

We're overcoming the challenges to our economy. And I also want you to know we're answering the great threats to our security. September the 11th, 2001, moved this country from grief to action. We made a pledge that day, and we have kept that pledge, that we will bring the guilty to justice, and we will take the fight to the enemy.

And we now see the nature of the enemy very clearly. These people are terrorists, coldblooded killers. They plot in secret. They target the innocent. They defile a great religion, and they hate everything America stands for. They're not going to be stopped by negotiations. They won't be appeased. Therapy is not going to work on them. *[Laughter]* They must be fought. They must be found, and they must be defeated. We are in a new kind of war, and it requires a new kind of strategy. We will not wait for further attacks. We will not hope for the best. We will strike our enemies before they can strike us again.

We've taken unprecedented steps to protect this homeland. We have a solemn duty to do so. Yet wars are won on the offensive, and America and our friends will stay on the offensive. We're hunting down the Al Qaida wherever they hide, whether it be

from Pakistan or Iraq or the Philippines or the Horn of Africa. And we're making good progress. Nearly two-thirds of Al Qaida's known leaders have been captured or killed.

The resolve of this Nation is firm, and it is clear. No matter how long it takes, all who plot against America will face the justice of America. This administration has also sent a message that has been heard around the world: "If you harbor a terrorist, if you support a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists." And the Taliban in Afghanistan found out what we meant. Thanks to our great military, Afghanistan is no longer a haven for terror; America is safer from attack; and the long-suffering people of that country are now free. You need to remember, thanks to our Nation and a coalition of nations, many young girls now go to school for the first time in Afghanistan.

And we fought the war on terror in Iraq. The regime of Saddam Hussein possessed and used weapons of mass destruction. The regime of Saddam Hussein sponsored terrorist groups. The regime of Saddam Hussein inflicted terror on its own people. Nearly every nation recognized and denounced this threat for over a decade. And finally the United Nations Security Council, in Resolution 1441, demanded that Saddam Hussein disarm, prove his disarmament to the world, or face serious consequences. The choice was up to the dictator, and he chose poorly.

I acted because I was not about to leave the security of the American people in the hands of a mad man. I was not about to stand by and wait and trust in the sanity and restraint of Saddam Hussein. So we acted, in one of the swiftest and most humane military campaigns in history.

Since the liberation of Iraq, our investigators have found evidence of a clandestine network of biological laboratories, advanced design work on prohibited longer range missiles, an elaborate campaign to hide illegal programs. We've still got more

to investigate. Yet it is undeniable that Saddam Hussein was in clear violation of United Nations Security Resolution 1441, which said he must disarm, prove his disarmament, or face serious consequences. It is undeniable that Saddam Hussein was a deceiver and a danger. The United Nations Security Council was right to demand that Saddam disarm, and we were right to enforce that demand.

Who can possibly think the world would be better off with Saddam Hussein still in power? Surely not the dissidents who would be in his prisons or end up in the mass graves. Surely not the men and women who would fill Saddam's torture chambers or rape rooms. Surely not the families of victims he murdered with poison gas. Surely not anyone who cares about human rights and democracy and stability in the Middle East. There's only one decent and humane reaction to the fall of Saddam Hussein: Good riddance!

Our country now is approaching a choice. After all the action we have taken, after all the progress we have made against terror, there is a temptation to think the danger has passed. The danger hadn't passed. Since September the 11th, 2001, the terrorists have taken lives in Casablanca, Mombasa, Jerusalem, Amman, Riyadh, Baghdad, Karachi, New Delhi, Bali, Jakarta. Today an American died as a result of a terrorist attack in Gaza. No, they continue to plot. They continue to plan against our country and our people. America must not forget the lessons of September the 11th.

America cannot retreat from our responsibilities and hope for the best. Our security will not be gained by timid measures. Our security requires constant vigilance and decisive action. I believe America has only one option: We must, and we will, fight the war on terror until our work is done.

We're fighting on many fronts, and Iraq is now the central front. Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to undermine Iraq's progress. See, they hate freedom. They can't stand the thought

of a peaceful and hopeful society. They want to throw the country into chaos. The terrorists believe their attacks on innocent people will weaken our resolve. They don't understand our country. See, they believe we'll run from a challenge. This country will not be intimidated by a group of cold-blooded killers. This country will stay the course.

We're making good progress in Iraq. We're after the killers. We've got better intelligence now. The Iraqi citizens are coming forward to help us secure their own country. We've got great strike teams of brave soldiers who are moving on a moment's notice to bring people to justice. And at the same time, we're making the country more secure. We're opening up hospitals and schools and roads. We're bringing electricity to the people who suffered under the hands of a tyrant, who spent his money on weapons and palaces and not on the people. Slowly but surely, this country is emerging as a peaceful and democratic and hopeful place. And that's in our national interest. A peaceful and hopeful Iraq will make America more secure, because there will be freedom in the heart of a part of the world that needs freedom. Free countries don't attack their neighbors. Free countries are peaceful countries.

But we also believe something else about freedom and liberty. We don't believe that freedom is America's gift to the world. We believe freedom is the God Almighty's gift to each and every person in the world.

No, we're making progress, and we'll do the job the right way. We'll make sure that Iraq has got a constitution and free elections. We'll make sure the job gets done the right way, so that the Iraqi people will show the Middle East and the world that liberty is the hope and the right of every land. The work in Iraq and the work on the war against terror has been tough, and it's been hard, but we're doing our duty to future generations of Americans. We're doing our duty to make sure that we spread freedom and peace and, at the same time, make America more secure.

This country has overcome a lot. We've overcome attacks and recessions and corporate scandals. We've overcome tyrants, people who have harbored terrorists. But there's no doubt in my mind that because of who we are and who we—what we stand for, this Nation can not only overcome challenges, but we'll do our duty to make sure America is as hopeful and secure for every person who is fortunate enough to live in this land.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. at the Ruiz Foods plant. In his remarks, he referred to Fred Ruiz, cofounder and chairman, Kim Ruiz Beck, vice chairman, and John Signorino, president, Ruiz Foods, Inc.; Fred Ruiz' parents, Rosie and Louis; Governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Fresno, California *October 15, 2003*

Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be back in California. It's great to be back in Fresno. I was trying to figure out, since I've been running for President, this

is either my third or fourth time here. And every time I come, I'm better off for it. [Laughter] It kind of reminds me of where